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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE PROHIBITION OF THE DEVELOPMENT, PRODUCTION, STOCKPILING AND USE OF CHEMICAL WEAPONS AND ON THEIR DESTRUCTION

Letter dated 9 May 1997 from the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the texts of the message from the President of the Russian Federation, B. N. Yeltsin, to the first session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (annex I) and the appeal by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation addressed to that Conference (annex II).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annexes circulated as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 71 (o) of the preliminary list.

(Signed) S. V. LAVROV
Ambassador

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ANNEX I

Message from the President of the Russian Federation to the first session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, of 6 May 1997

I sincerely welcome the first session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The Russian Federation is pleased to mark the entry into force on 29 April 1997 of the Convention on the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, which is designed to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. This treaty was the result of work carried out over many years by the international community in which our country was an active participant. The main task of the current session is to ensure the sound establishment of the Convention's mechanisms, which would guarantee the treaty's effectiveness and universality.

The Convention has been submitted for ratification to the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation. The Parliament has already begun active work on the document. In its appeal to the Conference, the State Duma expressed its intention to complete the ratification process as far as possible in the autumn of this year, having underscored the importance of taking account of the issues that are of fundamental importance for the Russian Federation in the decisions of the Conference.

During the period preceding its ratification, the Russian Federation intends to refrain from any actions that might nullify the Convention's objective and purpose. From the moment of its signing, we have carried out and shall continue to carry out the obligations relating to the non-development and the non-production of chemical weapons; the non-transfer of such weapons directly or indirectly to anyone whatsoever; the non-use of chemical weapons; the refusal to carry out any military preparations for their use, or provide assistance to, encourage or incite anyone to conduct any activities prohibited under the Convention; and the non-use of riot control agents as a method of warfare. We have taken steps to ensure that toxic chemicals and their precursors are developed, produced, acquired, stored, transferred and used solely for purposes that are not prohibited under the Convention. The Russian Federation is also conducting preparations for the practical destruction of chemical weapons. A federal law has been adopted on the destruction of these weapons.

We intend to maintain close relations with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) and discuss with its leaders questions relating to cooperation. The Russian Federation would be prepared to submit to OPCW information on its stockpiles of chemical weapons and their location and participate in measures to provide possible assistance for protection against chemical weapons and through the economic and technological cooperation provided for under articles X and XI of the Convention. It is our belief that the establishment of a mechanism enabling the Russian Federation to take part in the

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elaboration and adoption of decisions that would make it possible to take account of its political and defence interests would be conducive to this. All this would also create the conditions for the Russian Federation's entry into OPCW at such a time when it could immediately play a meaningful role in the organization's work. I hope that the Conference's first session will attentively consider the issues that we are raising.

I wish the participants in the first session success in their very demanding work in dealing with the tasks facing the Conference for the benefit of peace and international security.

ANNEX II

Appeal by the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation to the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, of 25 April 1997

In connection with the entry into force of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (hereinafter referred to as "the Convention") and the opening of the first session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction (hereinafter referred to as "the Conference"),

Declaring its commitment to the obligations undertaken by the Russian Federation to destroy its chemical weapons,

Desiring to contribute to the achievement of the goals of the Convention,

Recognizing the need, in the interests of all mankind, to exclude completely the possibility of the use of chemical weapons,

Aware of the enormous international importance of the ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation and the United States of America,

Addressing the Conference in accordance with its plenary powers,

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation:

Confirms its positive position with regard to the need for the complete destruction of chemical weapons through the adoption by the State Duma on 25 April 1997 of a federal act on the destruction of chemical weapons;

States that it has begun the process of ratifying the Convention, intending to complete that process as far as possible in the autumn of this year, if the necessary conditions for doing so are created;

Notes that the difficulties relating to the ratification of the Convention are caused solely by the complex economic situation in the Russian Federation and that the prospects for economic development in the near future do not make it feasible to rely on the possibility of a sharp increase in finances for dealing with this problem;

Calls upon the Conference to promote the creation of favourable conditions for stepping up the process of the ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation.

The State Duma believes that completion of the process of ratifying the Convention by the Russian Federation would be facilitated by:

Taking account at the Conference of the possibility of extending the deadlines for destroying chemical-weapon stockpiles and of the interests of the Russian Federation in resolving the remaining issues, including the questions relating to the procedure for payment for inspection activities in order to reduce the financial burden of the receiving Party and the conversion of former chemical weapon production facilities;

An appeal by the Conference to the States Parties to the Convention for a substantial increase in financial assistance to the Russian Federation on the part of the States Parties to the Convention and a search for additional sources of such assistance, including consideration of the possibilities offered by international organizations.

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation requests the Conference to consider the circumstances that are impeding the ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation as constituting force majeure and, in connection with this, to assist, during the period of the Russian Federation's ratification of the Convention, its proper participation in the drafting and adoption of key decisions as well as its participation in the administrative and executive bodies of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons.

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation declares that the decision on the ratification of the Convention will be adopted with account taken also of the results of the discussion at the first session of the Conference of the issues that are of fundamental importance for the Russian Federation.

The State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation wishes the Conference fruitful work on behalf of peace and disarmament and also expresses the hope for understanding and a constructive resolution of the issues referred to, which will promote the ratification of the Convention by the Russian Federation.